Renegade Press

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WORDSMITH

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APPEARANCES

SAN ANTONIO, TX - SEPT. 19 & 20

SCOTT SHAW &
DON DOUGHERTY (AMUSING STORIES)

WORDSMITH

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NO. 10 AUGUST 1987

Deni Loubert
Publisher

Wendi Lee
Press Liaison

Jennifer Grasberger
Assistant to the Publisher

Peter Avanzino
Circulation

Distributors:

Bud Plant Inc.
Diamond Comics
Comics Unltd. Ltd.
Capital City Dist.
Styx Comic Service
Sunrise Comics
Now and Then Books
Andromeda Pub.
Second Genesis
Titan Dist.

Renegade Logo Design by Dave Roman

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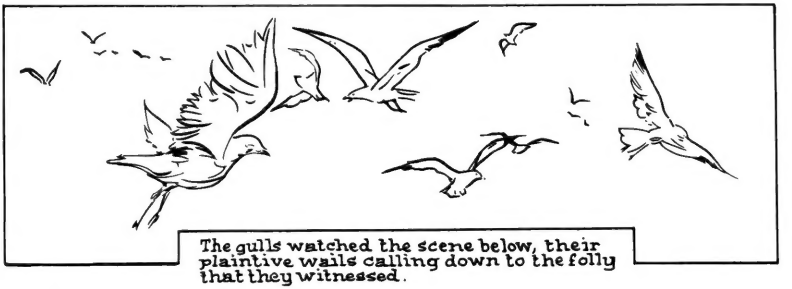
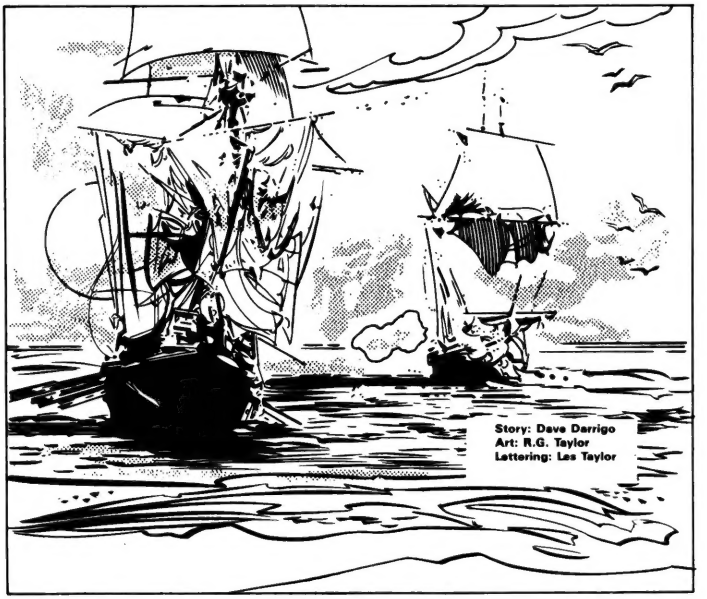


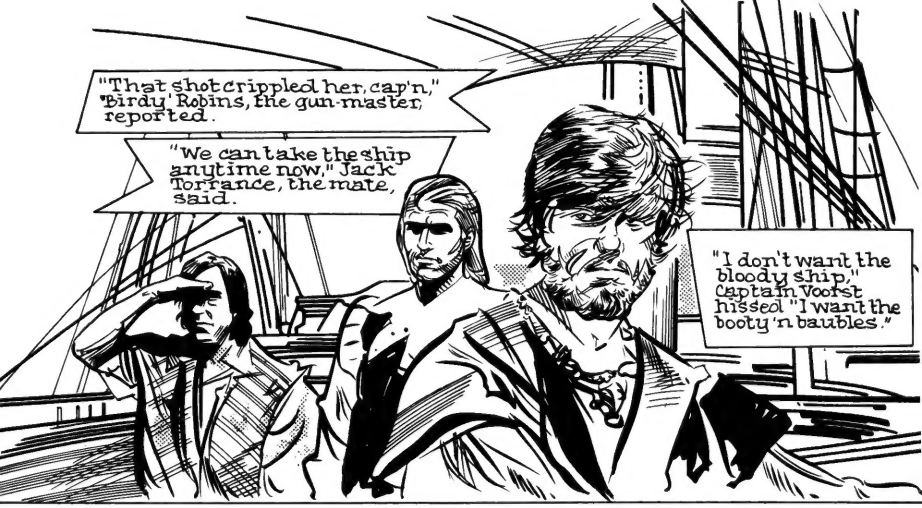
CASTLES IN SPAIN

The folly of bloodlust, of man killing man, of destruction and conquest. The battle had raged for one full hour now, a testament to the sea-faring skills of the two captains. Both were veteran warriors who knew how to work the winds to their tactical advantage.

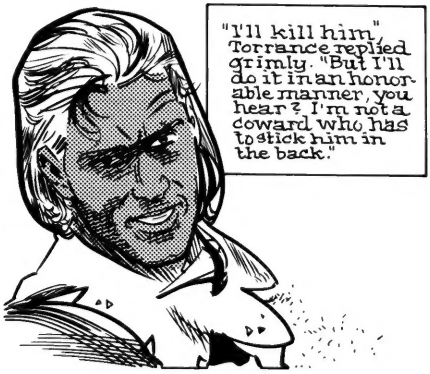
The Spanish captain's port-side guns were fresh and he put the galleon on a course for a larboard broadside of the pirate brig.

Then one errant, but decisive, six-pounder shot from the caribbean marauder hit the galleon's main mast and snapped the pole in two.

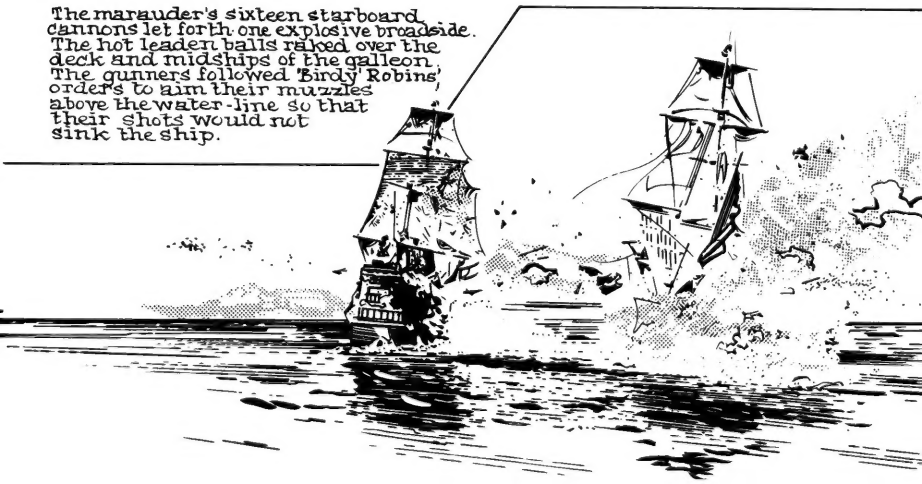



"That shot crippled her, cap'n," 'Birdy' Robins, the gun-master, reported.
"We can take the ship anytime now," Jack Torrance, the mate, said.
"I don't want the bloody ship," Captain Voorst hissed. "I want the booty 'n baubles."

Voorst moved away to attend to other matters. Birdy approached Torrance and said, "You've got to kill Voorst soon - when we board the galleon."


"I'll kill him," Torrance replied grimly. "But I'll do it in an honorable manner, you hear? I'm not a coward who has to stick him in the back."

The marauder's sixteen starboard cannons let forth one explosive broadside. The hot leaden balls raked over the deck and midships of the galleon. The gunners followed 'Birdy' Robins' orders to aim their muzzles above the water-line so that their shots would not sink the ship.



"All hands on deck! Prepare for boarding!" Voorst called. "Kill them all quick and clean, lads! The sooner we get the loot, the better."
The crew had grown to hate Voorst, but his guttural exhortations could still kindle the fire of their greedy souls.
Voorst battled a Spanish nobleman who had remained on deck to protect his family. "Get out of my way, you peacock!" Voorst shouted. "I want your Captain!"
Torrance fought a Spanish sailor and watched Voorst as he killed the nobleman and began stalking the Captain.
Voorst soon found the Captain. Their duel continued until the Captain had been disarmed. He was on one knee and awaiting the death blow. Voorst raised his sword arm and —
— began to put his weight into the final stroke when Torrance's hand took hold of his arm and stopped him.

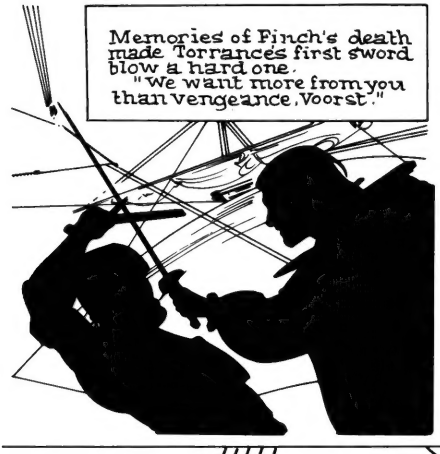
"The Captain is not to be harmed, Voorst," Torrance ordered. "He is my prisoner-of-war."

"Ha!" I thought as much," Voorst said. "You've been planning a mutiny for weeks now, haven't you, you scurvy dog?"

"Aye," Torrance answered. "You have few friends to help you now, after you hanged Finch."

Memories of Finch's death made Torrance's first sword blow a hard one.

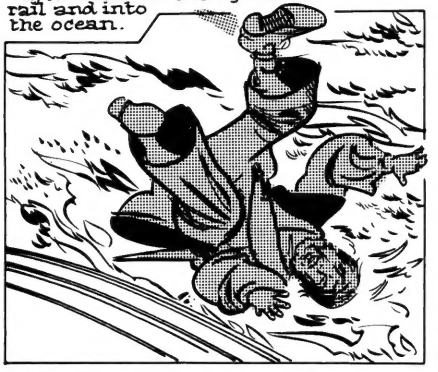
"We want more from you than vengeance, Voorst."



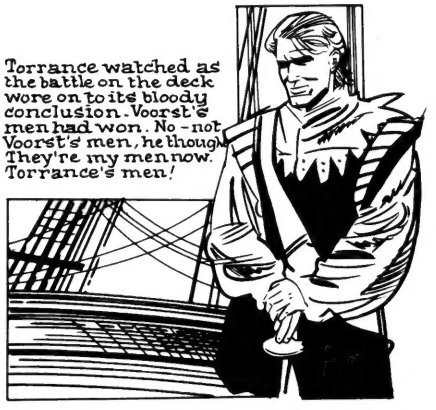
The sounds of battle still raged around the two figures, yet their ringing swords seemed the loudest.

"We want rid of your villainy!" Torrance said as he backed Voorst to the edge of the deck. "We want freedom from your tyranny!" he shouted as he delivered the death stroke.

Torrance pulled his cutlass out of Voorst. Then he lunged forward again, sticking the point of the blade into Voorst's chest with such great force that the pirate captain fell over the topside rail and into the ocean.



Torrance watched as the battle on the deck wore on to its bloody conclusion. Voorst's men had won. No - not Voorst's men, he thought. They're my men now. Torrance's men!



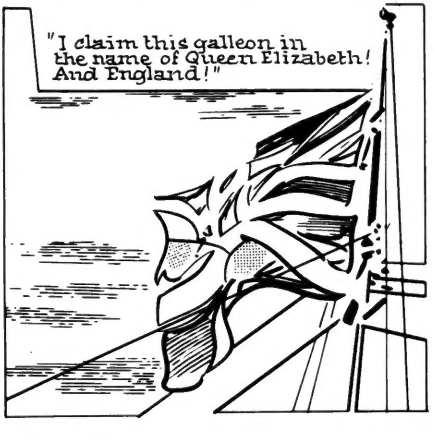
Torrance accepted the surrender of the Spanish captain whose life he had saved earlier in the battle.

"Rest assured that my men will not slaughter or rape your passengers," Torrance told him. "I am the new captain of our ship and my orders will be obeyed. The galleon will be brought back to England and put in the service of the Queen."

Torrance raised his blood-caked cutlass over his head.

"Voorst is dead! I say that we join England in this war and help the Queen! We can gain amnesty if we serve her well! Raise the flag!"

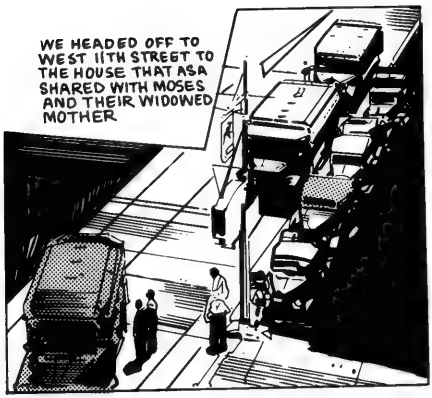
"I claim this galleon in the name of Queen Elizabeth! And England!"



NEW YORK CITY. SUMMER 1937.
I FINISHED THE PIRATE STORY FOR ADVENTURE MAGAZINE AND DROPPED IT IN AN ENVELOPE.
I'LL BUY A NEWSPAPER ON THE WAY TO THE LIBRARY.
HI, JOE. AFTERNOON PAPERS IN YET?
JUST GOT 'EM IN, CLAY.
YOU WANNA READ ABOUT SPAIN, HUH?
YEAH. AND THE NAZIS... HITLER'S GOING TO DESTROY EUROPE, JOE. MARK MY WORDS.
I WENT TO THE LOCAL LIBRARY BRANCH TO DO SOME MORE RESEARCH FOR MY WAR NOVEL, 'THE DIRT OF HEAVEN'.

MACHINE-GUNS... FLAME-THROWERS... MUSTARD-GAS... TANKS... ZEPPELIN BOMBERS... BIG BERTHA.
GOD, WHAT A CRAZY WAR!
HI, ASA. FUNNY MEETING YOU HERE.
IT'S A SMALL WORLD, BUDDY. AND IT'S GETTING SMALLER AND SMALLER EVERY DAY.
YOU SAID IT.
YOU READING ABOUT SPAIN? DOESN'T LOOK TOO GOOD, HUH?
MMMM. NO... AND IT'S A REAL SHAME. NOBODY GIVES A DAMN ABOUT IT... IT LOOKS LIKE THE ONLY ONE WHO'S GOING TO BENEFIT OUT OF ALL THIS FIGHTING IS IS HITLER. WIN OR LOSE.
YEAH. IT LOOKS BAD.
YOU LOOK TIRED.
I AM. I STAYED UP LATE AGAIN LAST NIGHT ARGUING ABOUT SPAIN WITH MY IDIOT BROTHER.
MOSES? HOW IS HE THESE DAYS?

WELL, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, HE WANTS TO GO TO SPAIN TO FIGHT FOR THE REPUBLICANS.
WHAT? HE FEELS THAT STRONGLY ABOUT THE WAR?
HE FEELS THE SAME WAY THAT YOU AND I DO – THAT HITLER IS USING SPAIN AS A BIG WAR GAME FOR HIS GOOSE-STEPPERS! THAT THE ONLY ONES WHO ARE GOING TO PUT HIM IN HIS PLACE ARE THE RUSSIANS.
HAS HE ACTUALLY ARRANGED TO GO TO SPAIN? IS HE GOING WITH SOMEONE ELSE?
HE'S GOING SOON - VERY SOON. THAT'S ALL I KNOW. HE'S KEEPING ALL THE DETAILS A SECRET. EVERYONE HAS TRIED TO TALK HIM OUT OF IT - BUT WE'VE JUST BEEN WASTING OUR TIME.
MAYBE HE'LL LISTEN TO YOU, CLAY. WOULD YOU GIVE IT A TRY?
I COULDN'T CALL MYSELF HIS FRIEND IF I DIDN'T TRY.


WE HEADED OFF TO WEST 11TH STREET TO THE HOUSE THAT ASA SHARED WITH MOSES AND THEIR WIDOWED MOTHER

MOSES SHOULD BE HOME FOR SUPPER SOON. WHY DON'T YOU EAT WITH US AND WE'LL HAVE ALL NIGHT TO —
— TO WASTE OUR TIME. HA, HA, HA.

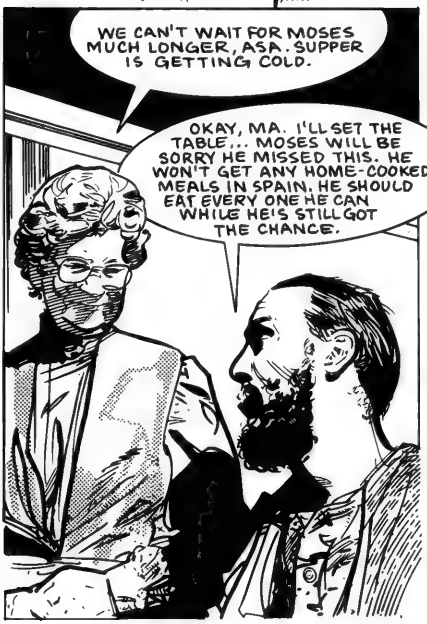
AS WE WENT INTO THE COHEN HOME I DIDN'T KNOW HOW PROPHETIC MY JOKE WOULD BE.

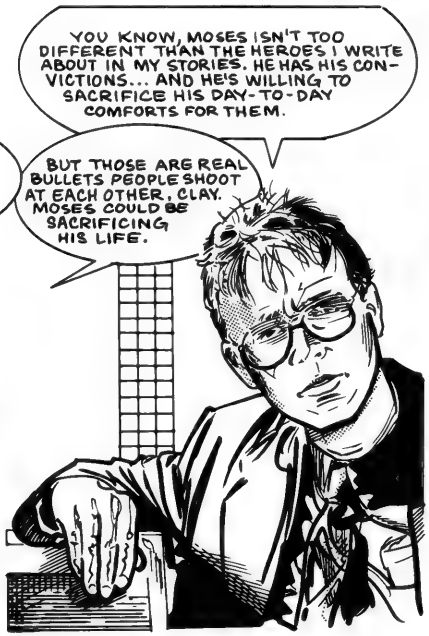
MA, YOU REMEMBER CLAY WASHBURN, DON'T YOU? HE'S JOINING US FOR SUPPER. HE WANTS TO TALK YOUR MULE-HEADED SON OUT OF GOING TO SPAIN.
CAN HE STOP MOSES?
I'LL TRY, MRS. COHEN. BUT IT WON'T BE EASY. MOSES CAN BE VERY PERSUASIVE WHEN HE GETS INVOLVED WITH AN ISSUE. I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF HE GETS ME GOING TO SPAIN WITH HIM BEFORE THE NIGHT'S OVER.

DO YOU KNOW WHEN MOSES WILL BE HOME, SON?
I DON'T KNOW, MA. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING HE DOES THESE DAYS... ALL I KNOW IS THAT THESE BOLSHEVIC FANATICS AT THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE HAVE HIM SNARED IN A WEB OF DECEIT... IT'S THAT OLD CANNON-FODDER THY NAME IS GLORY' ROUTINE! IT MAKES ME SICK! I'M SORRY I EVER BROUGHT HIM THERE.
TAKE IT EASY, PAL... REMEMBER HOW WE USED TO GO TO THE LEAGUE, TOO. WE WERE YOUNG AND FANATICAL OURSELVES ONCE, WHEN THE DEPRESSION BEGAN. OUR BATTLES WERE FOUGHT AGAINST ECONOMIC TYRANNY. NOW MOSES WANTS TO FIGHT POLITICAL TYRANNY.
SO, THE BIG DAY IS IN A COUPLE OF MONTHS NOW, EH? HOW DOES IT FEEL?
HA... WELL, I HAVE NO REGRETS. SHE'S A GREAT GIRL. SHE'S VERY SUPPORTIVE OF MY WORK... IF IT WASN'T FOR HER I DON'T THINK I WOULD BE CLOSE TO FINISHING THE DIRT OF HEAVEN RIGHT NOW.
I'M HAPPY IT ALL WORKED OUT FOR YOU, CLAY. YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN HAPPY WITH CLARISSA MIDDLETON. SHE WOULD'VE SAPPED YOUR SPIRIT AND DESTROYED YOU AS A WRITER.

YEAH. SHE NEVER REALIZED THE SKILL IT TAKES TO WRITE POPULAR FICTION. EVEN STORIES FOR DIME MAGAZINES. IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS IT LOOKS... IT'S FUNNY— I WAS JUST WRITING A NEW STORY ABOUT 16TH CENTURY PIRATES; WHEN THE SPANISH EMPIRE WAS AT ITS HEIGHT.

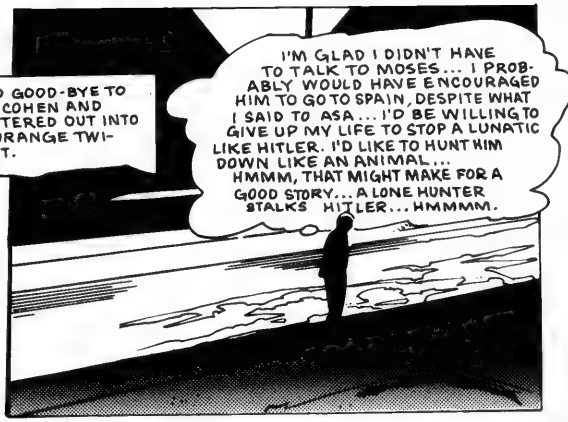
ONCE THE SYMBOLS OF SPAIN'S STRENGTH WERE IT'S PROUD, GOLDEN GALLEONS. BUT, LOOK AT IT NOW. IT'S JUST ANOTHER RUDDERLESS SHIP ADRIFT IN THE 20TH CENTURY.
AND, IF MR. HITLER HAS HIS WAY, OUR CENTURY WILL BE GERMANY'S.


WE CAN'T WAIT FOR MOSES MUCH LONGER, ASA. SUPPER IS GETTING COLD.
OKAY, MA. I'LL SET THE TABLE... MOSES WILL BE SORRY HE MISSED THIS. HE WON'T GET ANY HOME-COOKED MEALS IN SPAIN. HE SHOULD EAT EVERY ONE HE CAN WHILE HE'S STILL GOT THE CHANCE.


YOU KNOW, MOSES ISN'T TOO DIFFERENT THAN THE HEROES I WRITE ABOUT IN MY STORIES. HE HAS HIS CONVICTIONS... AND HE'S WILLING TO SACRIFICE HIS DAY-TO-DAY COMFORTS FOR THEM.
BUT THOSE ARE REAL BULLETS PEOPLE SHOOT AT EACH OTHER, CLAY. MOSES COULD BE SACRIFICING HIS LIFE.

OF COURSE! BUT THAT ISN'T THE WAY MOSES LOOKS AT IT. HE'D RATHER DIE FOR HIS IDEALS THAN LIVE IN GUILT WITH HIS DAY-TO-DAY COMFORTS.
AND I THINK THAT'S COMMENDABLE! BUT HE HAS TO SEE THAT YOU ONLY ENJOY THE FIGHT FOR YOUR IDEALS IF YOU LIVE TO TELL THE TALE! THERE'S NO GLORY IN DEATH! DEATH IS JUST... DEATH.
LATER.
THAT WAS A GOOD MEAL.
YEAH...VERY FILLING.
♫♫ DING DONG DING DONG ♫♫
♫♫ DING DONG DING DONG ♫♫
WHAT TIME IS IT? EIGHT O'CLOCK! NUTS, WE'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR OVER AN HOUR.
ASA! ASA, WAKE UP. IT'S EIGHT O'CLOCK... I'VE GOT TO GET HOME NOW. I'LL GET A TAXI.
MOSES HASN'T COME HOME YET? THAT DUMB SCREW-BALL... OKAY, CLAY. THANKS FOR COMING OVER HERE. I'M SORRY YOU COULDN'T TALK TO HIM. I THINK HE WOULD HAVE LISTENED TO YOUR WORDS OF WISDOM.

I SAID GOOD-BYE TO MRS. COHEN AND SAUNTERED OUT INTO THE ORANGE TWILIGHT.


I'M GLAD I DIDN'T HAVE TO TALK TO MOSES... I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE ENCOURAGED HIM TO GO TO SPAIN, DESPITE WHAT I SAID TO ASA... I'D BE WILLING TO GIVE UP MY LIFE TO STOP A LUNATIC LIKE HITLER. I'D LIKE TO HUNT HIM DOWN LIKE AN ANIMAL... HMMM, THAT MIGHT MAKE FOR A GOOD STORY... A LONE HUNTER STALKS HITLER... HMMMM.

I'LL HEAD OVER TO BLEEKER STREET AND GET A CAB... WAIT... WHO'S THAT GUY STANDING OVER THERE.

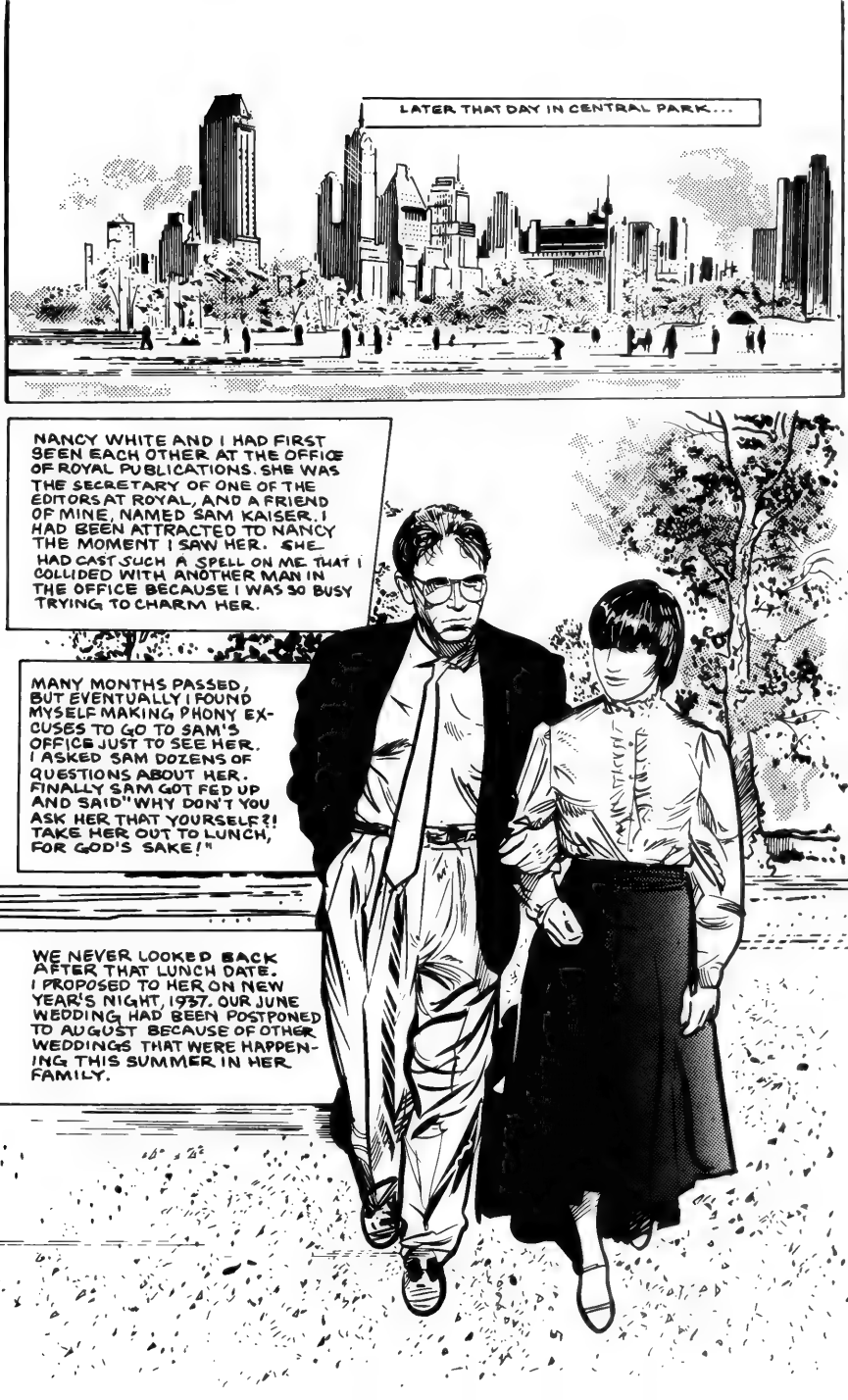
HE TURNED HIS BACK TO ME WHEN I GLANCED AT HIM... COULD IT BE MOSES?

I FLAGGED DOWN A CAB AND TOLD HIM TO DRIVE BACK TO THE SPOT WHERE I HAD SEEN THE MYSTERY FIGURE.
TAX

HE'S GONE! NUTS!... WAS IT MOSES? I'M NOT REALLY CERTAIN NOW.

THE NEXT DAY.
HOW YA DOIN', CLAY? NICE WEATHER TODAY, HUH?
YEAH. TOO NICE TO SPEND IT ALL IN A ROOM WORKING AT A TYPEWRITER. BUT I'LL BE GETTING OUT IN THE SUN LATER. I'VE GOT A DATE WITH NANCY. WE'RE GOING TO CENTRAL PARK.
ANY NEW MAGAZINES OUT?
THAT'S GOOD.
YEAH, A FEW... HAVE YOU LOOKED AT ANY OF DESE FUNNY BOOKS LATELY?
YOU MEAN THOSE BOOKS THAT HAVE THE FUNNIES FROM THE NEWSPAPERS?
NO. WHY? WHAT ABOUT THEM?
WELL. THEY GOT ONES DAT ARE COMING OUT WITH ALL-NEW STORIES IN 'EM. NOT FROM ANY NEWSPAPERS. LOOK AT DIS ONE. IT'S JUST LIKE DETECTIVE WEEKLY OR CRIME SMASHERS.
Detective
IT'S JUST LIKE A PULP, ONLY IT'S IN THE FORM OF FUNNIES... I DON'T THINK IT'LL LAST TOO LONG. PEOPLE WON'T PAY A DIME FOR SOMETHING LIKE DIS. NOT WHEN THEY CAN GET A PULP FOR THE SAME PRICE. KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
HMMMM. MAYBE.

BUT, SOMETIMES I THINK THE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS ARE FORGETTING ABOUT THE YOUNG KIDS WHO READ PULPS. THERE'S TOO MANY OF THESE 'SPICY' BOOKS OUT; THERE'S TOO MANY HALF NAKED WOMEN ON THE COVERS. IT'S GIVING THE BUSINESS A BAD NAME-PARENTS OF THESE KIDS WON'T LET THEM READ ANY PULP - NOT EVEN A 'SHADOW' OR A 'DOC SAVAGE... IT'S A SHAME.
NO, I THINK THESE COMICS COULD BECOME POPULAR... I'M GOING TO BUY THIS ONE, JOE. I'M GLAD YOU POINTED IT OUT TO ME.
LOOK AT THIS ONE - 'SLAM' BRADLEY. HE'S JUST LIKE BRASS KNUCKLES BENDIX... HERE'S 'SPEED' SAUNDERS... FLATFOOT FLANIGAN... COSMO, THE PHANTOM OF DISGUISE... GEEZ, THIS IS AN INTERESTING LITTLE EXPERIMENT.
THANKS, JOE. SEE YA LATER.
SEE YA, CLAY. HAVE A GOOD TIME IN DA PARK.
I SAW THE CRAZY LOOK JOE GAVE ME AS I BOUGHT THE COMIC BOOK. I NEVER COULD HAVE CONVINCED HIM THAT I WANTED TO 'STUDY' THE COMIC FROM A COMMERCIAL POINT OF VIEW. IT WAS A NEW FORM OF PERIODICAL, AND PERIODICALS WERE MY BREAD AND BUTTER. I HAD TO BE AWARE OF NEW TRENDS.
BESIDES, THE DAMN THING MADE ME FEEL LIKE A KID AGAIN. IT WAS JUST LIKE I'D DISCOVERED A NEW ROCK FOR MY GEOLOGY COLLECTION.


LATER THAT DAY IN CENTRAL PARK...
NANCY WHITE AND I HAD FIRST SEEN EACH OTHER AT THE OFFICE OF ROYAL PUBLICATIONS. SHE WAS THE SECRETARY OF ONE OF THE EDITORS AT ROYAL, AND A FRIEND OF MINE, NAMED SAM KAISER. I HAD BEEN ATTRACTED TO NANCY THE MOMENT I SAW HER. SHE HAD CAST SUCH A SPELL ON ME THAT I COLLIDED WITH ANOTHER MAN IN THE OFFICE BECAUSE I WAS SO BUSY TRYING TO CHARM HER.
MANY MONTHS PASSED, BUT EVENTUALLY I FOUND MYSELF MAKING PHONY EXCUSES TO GO TO SAM'S OFFICE JUST TO SEE HER. I ASKED SAM DOZENS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT HER. FINALLY SAM GOT FED UP AND SAID "WHY DON'T YOU ASK HER THAT YOURSELF?! TAKE HER OUT TO LUNCH, FOR GOD'S SAKE!"
WE NEVER LOOKED BACK AFTER THAT LUNCH DATE. I PROPOSED TO HER ON NEW YEAR'S NIGHT, 1937. OUR JUNE WEDDING HAD BEEN POSTPONED TO AUGUST BECAUSE OF OTHER WEDDINGS THAT WERE HAPPENING THIS SUMMER IN HER FAMILY.

I WAS TALKING TO HER ABOUT MY DISCOVERY OF THE COMIC BOOK EARLIER THAT DAY. I HAD READ THE COMIC BOOK WHEN I HAD GOT TO MY APARTMENT AND I WAS STILL EXCITED ABOUT IT. I TRIED TO CONVEY THIS FEELING TO NANCY. SHE LOOKED UP AT A BIRD IN A TREE AND SAID "ISN'T THAT A LOVELY BIRD?"
YEAH, IT WAS A LOVELY BIRD AND IT WAS A LOVELY DAY. BUT I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT THE COMIC BOOK. I HAD HOPED THAT NANCY WOULD SYMPATHIZE WITH ME. SHE HAD DONE SO IN THE PAST. THEN, JUST WHEN I THOUGHT SHE WOULD DISAPPOINT ME, SHE ASKED, "WHO PUBLISHES THESE COMIC BOOKS?"
I DON'T KNOW. WHY DO YOU ASK?
BECAUSE YOU COULD GO TO THEIR OFFICES AND TALK TO THEM. YOU SHOULDN'T KEEP SO MUCH OF YOUR CURIOSITY BOTTLED UP INSIDE YOU, CLAY.
I THOUGHT SHE WAS GOING TO DISAPPOINT ME, BUT NOW SHE HAD AMAZED ME. SHE KNEW THAT IT WAS FUTILE TO TALK TO ME ABOUT SOMETHING SHE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT. SO RATHER THAN IGNORE ME OR TRY CLUMSILY TO STRUGGLE TO ENGAGE ME ON THE SUBJECT SHE HAD SIMPLY SUGGESTED THAT I TAKE A DIRECT COURSE OF ACTION.
YEAH, IT WAS A SIMPLE SUGGESTION. I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THE SAME IDEA SOONER OR LATER. PROBABLY LATER... SHE KNEW ME TOO WELL. THAT'S WHY I LOVED HER.
I WONDER WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WRITE FOR ONE OF THOSE COMIC BOOKS?
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW UNLESS YOU TRY.

I KNOW A FEW WRITERS WHO WOULD LOVE TO MARRY YOU.
SORRY, I'M ALREADY SPOKEN FOR.
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO MEET NANCY'S SISTER HERE AT THE PARK.
IS THAT ANNE OVER THERE?
YES, THAT'S HER... AND KELLY.
SAY HELLO TO AUNT NANCY AND UNCLE CLAY, KELLY.
HI, NAN-EE.
HELLO, BUNNY-WUNNIE. HOW ARE YOU TODAY?
I WATCHED NANCY FOR A MOMENT WHICH WAS FROZEN IN TIME. SHE WAS SO DIFFERENT FROM CLARISSA MIDDLETON, MY FORMER GIRL-FRIEND. WHEN I LOVED CLARISSA, SHE WAS LIKE A FLOWER; HER SCENT WAS ALLURING AND, FOR A TIME, I HAD BEEN CAPTIVATED BY IT.
BUT NANCY WAS FAR MORE THAN A FLOWER TO ME. SHE WAS THE SOIL THE FLOWER WAS ROOTED IN; SHE WAS THE RAIN THAT WATERED THE SOIL; SHE WAS THE LIGHT OF THE SUN THAT GAVE THE FLOWER LIFE.

NANCY HELD KELLY FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND THEN SHE LOOKED AT ME AND SAID, "YOU HOLD HER, CLAY."
I HAD NEVER HELD A CHILD AS YOUNG AS KELLY BEFORE. IT WAS A STRANGE, AWKWARD FEELING AS I TOOK HOLD OF HER. I LIFTED HER UP OVER MY HEAD AND SHE LAUGHED. I DID IT SEVERAL TIMES AND SHE KEPT LAUGHING, LOUDER EACH TIME. I STARTED LAUGHING, TOO.
THEN THE THOUGHT OCCURRED TO ME — ONE DAY I WOULD HAVE MY OWN CHILD LIKE HER. THE THOUGHT SURPRISED ME, BUT THEN I QUICKLY EMBRACED THE IDEA. I HAD BEEN AN ORPHAN, BUT THAT WOULD NOT STOP ME FROM GIVING MY CHILD EVERYTHING THAT I HAD BEEN DENIED.
"LET'S TAKE A BOAT OUT INTO THE LAKE," NANCY SAID TO ME.

A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER I RECEIVED A CALL AT MY APARTMENT.
HELLO, CLAY. IT'S MOSES.
MOSES! WAS THAT YOU I SAW THE OTHER EVENING WHEN I LEFT YOUR HOUSE?
YEAH. THAT WAS ME. I LOOKED INTO THE WINDOW BEFORE I WENT INTO THE HOUSE. THAT'S WHEN I SAW YOU AND ASA WAITING FOR ME.
I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU. I THINK —
CLAY, I'M NOT CALLING FROM MY HOUSE. I HAVEN'T GONE BACK THERE SINCE YOU SAW ME. I'M TIRED OF TALKING ABOUT SPAIN TO PEOPLE. NO ONE CAN TALK ME OUT OF IT. I KNOW THE RISKS... I HAVE FRIENDS THAT ARE GOING, TOO. THEY KNOW THE RISKS... TALK NEVER SOLVES ANYTHING. IF FASCISTS ONLY LISTEN TO GUNS, THEN WE'LL SPEAK TO THEM WITH OUR BULLETS.
I KNEW THAT YOU COULD DIE FOR YOUR BELIEFS, MOSES. BUT I NEVER THOUGHT THAT YOU COULD KILL FOR THEM, TOO.
WHEN ARE YOU GOING?
IT WON'T BE EASY, CLAY. BUT, I CAN DO IT... I WILL DO IT.
SOON. I CAN'T TELL YOU WHEN.
CAN'T WE SEE EACH OTHER... TO SAY GOOD-BYE?
NO, SORRY, CLAY... I'M SAYING GOOD-BYE NOW... I HOPE I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN SOME DAY. I'M SURE THAT I'LL BE A BETTER POET IF I COME BACK. BUT IF I DON'T SEE YOU AGAIN, DON'T LAMENT MY FATE. I'LL DIE A HAPPY MAN.

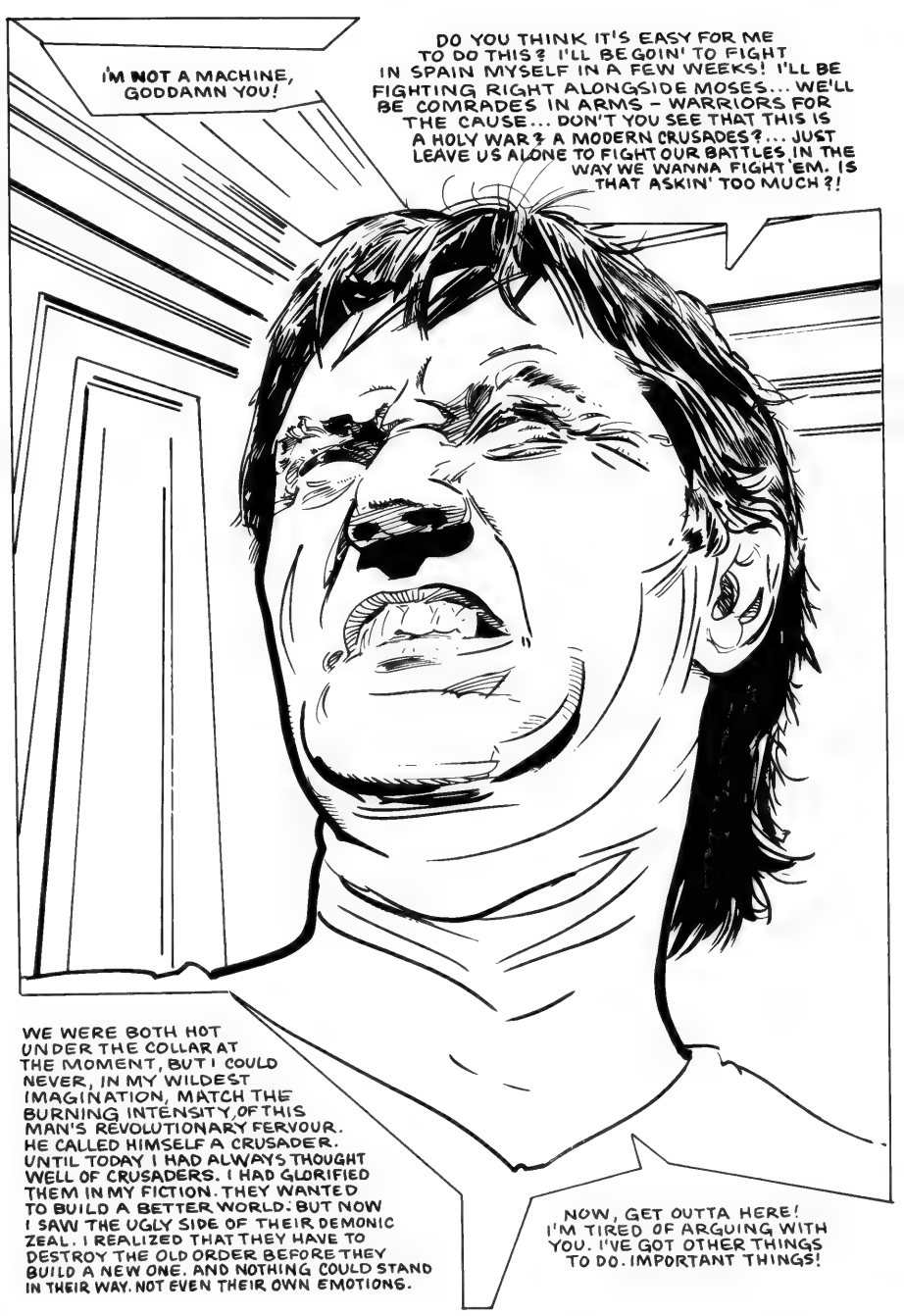
COME ON, MOSES. DON'T TALK LIKE — MOSES? MOSES!
I BETTER CALL ASA.
HI, BUDDY WHAT'S UP? ... YOU HEARD FROM HIM?... DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS?
YEAH. THAT'S RIGHT. HE HASN'T COME HOME SINCE YOU WERE HERE... I'VE GOTTA SEE HIM, CLAY. AT LEAST TO SAY GOOD-BYE AND WISH HIM LUCK.
THERE'S STILL A CHANCE THAT WE CAN TRACK HIM DOWN. BUT, WE HAVE TO MOVE FAST. I'LL GET A TAXI AND BE OVER AT YOUR PLACE IN FIFTEEN MINUTES.
"WHERE ARE WE GOING?" ASA ASKED IN THE CAB.
"THE HALL OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST LEAGUE," I REPLIED. "THAT'S WHERE MOSES WOULD HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO GO TO SPAIN."
"DO YOU THINK HE'S STAYING THERE?" ASA SAID.
"I DON'T KNOW. BUT I'M SURE THEY KNOW WHEN HE'S LEAVING."
"THEY'LL NEVER TELL US, CLAY. THEY WON'T SPILL THE BEANS ON A FELLOW COMRADE."
THE TAXI STOPPED ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE HALL. IT HAD BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE I'D LAST VISITED THE PLACE. THE BUILDING LOOKED LIKE A QUIET VICTORIAN THEATRE RATHER THAN A BUSY NEST OF COMMUNIST FANATICS.

THERE WAS A RECEPTIONIST AT THE DOOR.
IS THERE SOMEONE WE CAN TALK TO ABOUT THE VOLUNTEERS FOR SPAIN?
VOLUNTEERS FOR SPAIN? I'M SORRY, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
LOOK, I'M NOT FROM THE POLICE. I JUST WANT TO ASK ABOUT MY BROTHER, MOSES COHEN.
DO YOU SEE ANY RECRUITMENT STAFF AROUND HERE? IF PEOPLE WANT TO GO TO FIGHT IN SPAIN, THEY JUST GET UP AND GO.
LOOK, LADY. I'M TRYING TO BE NICE ABOUT THIS -
IT'S ALL RIGHT, DINAH. I'LL TALK TO THEM.
I'M ED ROGOWSKI. COME INTO MY OFFICE. WE CAN TALK THERE.
DO YOU WANT US TO COME TOO, COMRADE ED?
YEAH.

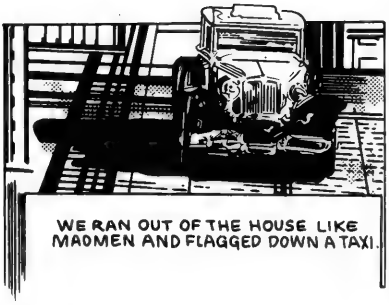
WE DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE, COMRADE... MY FRIEND CLAY AND I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE — WE'VE HELPED RAISE MONEY FOR THE SOCIALIST CAUSE. WE'VE FOUGHT STRIKE-BREAKERS — JUST LIKE YOU. WE'VE FOUGHT THE POLICE IN UNION SQUARE — JUST LIKE YOU.
YEAH? THEN WHY CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT MOSES WANTS TO FIGHT FOR THE REVOLUTION — WHERE WE NEED HIM THE MOST RIGHT NOW. IN SPAIN! AGAINST THE FASCISTS!
SO. YOU ADMIT THAT YOU KNOW MOSES COHEN. AND YOU ADMIT THAT YOU HAVE RECRUITED HIM TO FIGHT IN SPAIN. THEN YOU MUST KNOW WHEN HE'S LEAVING NEW YORK — AND HOW HE'S TRAVELLING.
WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHERE HE IS — SO WE CAN TALK TO HIM, FACE-TO-FACE.
BECAUSE MOSES DOESN'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU. HE TOLD ME THAT YOU TWO MIGHT SHOW UP HERE. AND HE INSTRUCTED ME TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT HIS MOVEMENTS — UNTIL HE'S LEFT TOWN.

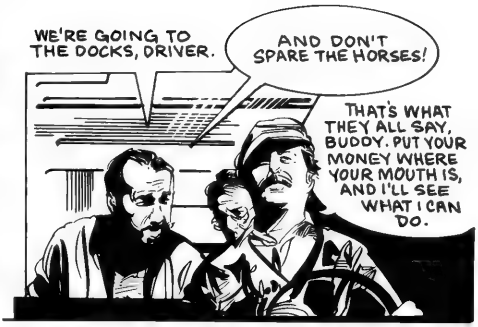
I'M HIS BROTHER, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
IF YOU HAD A KID BROTHER WHO WAS GOING OFF TO A WAR, WOULDN'T YOU WANT TO SEE HIM ONE LAST TIME – TO SHAKE HIS HAND AND LOOK HIM IN THE EYE AND WISH HIM A SAFE RETURN?
I'M JUST DOING MY JOB.
GOD! GOD, SAVE ME! I DON'T BELIEVE THIS WORLD! EVERYTHING WE DO SEEMS SO FUTILE AND SENSELESS. EVERYBODY IS MAD! UTTERLY MAD!
IF YOU'VE GOT A SHRED OF HUMANITY IN YOU, YOU'LL TELL US WHERE MOSES IS!
I'M NOT GONNA TELL YOU. IF MOSES WANTS TO DO THINGS THIS WAY, I'M GOIN' TO RESPECT HIS DECISION... NOW WHY DON'T YOU TWO GUYS SHOW HIM SOME RESPECT, TOO, AND LEAVE BEFORE-
BEFORE WHAT?! BEFORE YOU THROW US OUT?! GO AHEAD, LAMEBRAIN! TRY AND THROW US OUT!

HEY! I'M ONLY DOIN' WHAT MOSES ASKED ME TO DO!... I'M SORRY... I REALLY AM – I'M SORRY.
NO! YOU'RE NOT SORRY! ONLY PEOPLE WHO HAVE SOME EMOTIONS CAN BE SORRY! YOU'VE GOT NO EMOTIONS! YOU'RE JUST A MACHINE! IF I PUNCHED YOU IN THE MOUTH RIGHT NOW YOU WOULDN'T FEEL ANY PAIN! BECAUSE A MACHINE HAS NO FEELING!
UNNNGH. TAKE IT EASY, MAC.


I'M NOT A MACHINE, GODDAMN YOU!
DO YOU THINK IT'S EASY FOR ME TO DO THIS? I'LL BE GOIN' TO FIGHT IN SPAIN MYSELF IN A FEW WEEKS! I'LL BE FIGHTING RIGHT ALONGSIDE MOSES... WE'LL BE COMRADES IN ARMS - WARRIORS FOR THE CAUSE... DON'T YOU SEE THAT THIS IS A HOLY WAR? A MODERN CRUSADES?... JUST LEAVE US ALONE TO FIGHT OUR BATTLES IN THE WAY WE WANNA FIGHT 'EM. IS THAT ASKIN' TOO MUCH?!
WE WERE BOTH HOT UNDER THE COLLAR AT THE MOMENT, BUT I COULD NEVER, IN MY WILDEST IMAGINATION, MATCH THE BURNING INTENSITY OF THIS MAN'S REVOLUTIONARY FERVOUR. HE CALLED HIMSELF A CRUSADER. UNTIL TODAY I HAD ALWAYS THOUGHT WELL OF CRUSADERS. I HAD GLORIFIED THEM IN MY FICTION. THEY WANTED TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD: BUT NOW I SAW THE UGLY SIDE OF THEIR DEMONIC ZEAL. I REALIZED THAT THEY HAVE TO DESTROY THE OLD ORDER BEFORE THEY BUILD A NEW ONE. AND NOTHING COULD STAND IN THEIR WAY. NOT EVEN THEIR OWN EMOTIONS.
NOW, GET OUTTA HERE! I'M TIRED OF ARGUING WITH YOU. I'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO DO. IMPORTANT THINGS!

AND DON'T COME BACK! YA HEAR?
THANKS, CLAY... I WANTED TO TAKE A SWING AT HIM MYSELF — BUT I JUST COULDN'T DO IT.
WE RETURNED TO THE COHEN HOUSE.
HI, MA. WE'RE BACK... WHY DON'T YOU STAY FOR SUPPER AGAIN, PAL? THAT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO FOR YOU AFTER ALL THE HELP YOU'VE GIVEN US.
THANKS... HOW ABOUT TAKING IN A MOVIE LATER? IT'LL HELP US FORGET THIS WHOLE MESS.
briiing
MRS. COHEN ANSWERED THE PHONE IN ANOTHER ROOM.
HELLO.
WE ASSUMED THAT IT WAS A PRIVATE CALL FOR HER AS WE WENT INTO THE KITCHEN TO POUR SOME DRINKS.
GOOD-BYE, DEAR. TAKE OF YOURSELF.
WHO WAS THAT ON THE PHONE, MA?
IT WAS MOSES.
MOSES?!
YES. HE SAID HIS SHIP IS LEAVING IN AN HOUR AND HE WANTED TO SAY GOODBYE AND GIVE US HIS LOVE... I'M GLAD HE CALLED. I TOLD HIM THAT WE'RE PROUD OF HIM. I THINK HE LIKED TO HEAR THAT.


WE RAN OUT OF THE HOUSE LIKE MADMEN AND FLAGGED DOWN A TAXI.


WE'RE GOING TO THE DOCKS, DRIVER.
AND DON'T SPARE THE HORSES!
THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY, BUDDY. PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS, AND I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.

ASA TURNED TO ME AND GAVE ME THAT "I'M BROKE" LOOK.
A FEW YEARS AGO, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF FINANCIALLY THAN HE WAS NOW.
"I'LL TRIPLE THE FARE," I CALLED OUT.
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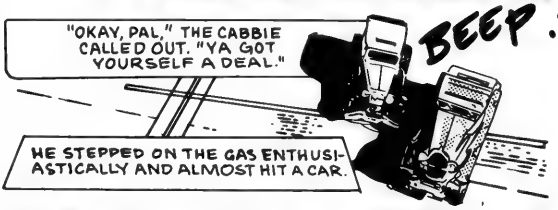
"OKAY, PAL," THE CABBIE CALLED OUT. "YA GOT YOURSELF A DEAL."
BEEP!
HE STEPPED ON THE GAS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND ALMOST HIT A CAR.

IT'S A GOOD THING YOU GUYS STOPPED ME—

—BECAUSE I'M WORKING FOR A NEW COMPANY AND WE'VE GOT A WHOLE FLEET OF MODERN AUTOMOBILES. WE CAN—
WATCH WHERE YOU'RE DRIVIN', WILL YA!

WE CAN GO ANYWHERE IN THE CITY NOW, IN JUST A FEW MINUTES.
BAM
WHAT WAS THAT?
"UHHH, I THINK I GOT A FLAT," THE CABBIE SAID.
HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO FIX IT?"
ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES.
TWENTY MINUTES! ARE YOU CRAZY?! I COULD RUN TO THE DOCKS IN TWENTY MINUTES!
YOU SAID THAT YOUR CAR WAS PART OF A MODERN FLEET! DON'T THEY PUT MODERN TIRES ON YOUR CARS?!
THEY PUT MODERN BULKHEADS ON THE TITANIC AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO IT!
I WISH I WAS ON THE TITANIC RIGHT NOW!... GOD, WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?!
WE WERE STRANDED IN A PART OF THE CITY THAT SAW LITTLE CAB TRAFFIC. I HELPED THE DRIVER CHANGE THE TIRE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. ASA WENT OFF TO TRY TO GET ANOTHER CAB.

EVENTUALLY WE MADE IT TO THE DOCKS.
WE WERE LUCKY. WE FOUND SOMEONE WHO KNEW THE EXACT SHIP WE WANTED TO FIND.
IT WAS AN EXHAUSTING, SWEATY RUN TO PIER 36 - BUT WE MADE IT THERE.
DAMN!!
THE SHIP HAD LEFT DOCK.
DAMN.

WATER LAPPED AT THE PIER UNDER OUR FEET.
SWEAT TRICKLED OFF OUR BROWS.
WE LISTENED TO EACH OTHER CATCH HIS BREATH.
THE COOL BREEZE DRIED OUR SWEAT AND FED OUR LUNGS.
THE SHIP BLEW ITS HORN, TELLING THE TUGBOATS TO CLEAR AWAY.
LOOK, ASA! DO YOU SEE THAT GUY AT THE BOW?
THERE! DO YOU SEE HIM? HE'S WAVING TO US. IT'S GOTTA BE HIM!
MOSES!!

DON'T WORRY, PAL. HE CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF. HE'LL MAKE IT BACK IN ONE PIECE.
HMMMPF! I'LL TELL YOU, CLAY. IF I EVER SEE HIM AGAIN, HE'D BETTER RUN...
...BECAUSE I'M GONNA KILL HIM!!
HA, HA, HA, HA. COME ON, LET'S GO HOME.
THE GULLS WATCHED THE SCENE BELOW, THEIR PLAINTIVE WAILS CALLING DOWN TO THE FOLLY THAT THEY WITNESSED.
FIN